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Living With Music

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By

DAVID BARNETT

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Chapter One

At the risk of being called banal in my very first sentence, I shall say, nevertheless, that since September, 1939, everything that has happened in the world has had a new and direct bearing on the individual lives of private citizens. News is not just news. Every development in this fantastic, bizarre world in which we now move belongs to each person, not simply to responsible people at the head of the government. As the war drew nearer to us in a physical sense, we wanted to take up our rôles in it. That problem was solved by many when they enlisted or were drafted in the service of their country. Others entered upon civilian defense activities and other volunteer war work. Business reorganized in order to fulfill government war contracts. I am a musician. I noticed that many musicians, the great and less than great, were eagerly contributing their services to the cause of morale and entertainment. I was happy that the USO and similar organizations were so besieged. They would not really need another pianist. From the forgotten recesses of my boyhood hobbies, I revived an interest in engineering drawing, studied it again and, after an elementary refresher course, took a rather more advanced course offered by Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There, with the kindly interest and encouragement of Professor

Watts, I completed this course—not without difficulties, the week is just seven days long, my schedule more than full. However, it was completed, and I even participated in the organization of defense courses in the subject at Wellesley College, where I teach music. During the past summer, I worked as a draftsman in a factory doing war work. The picture on my identification button made me look very unlike anyone's conception of a musician. It may be that I will be called into the service. If so, even my curtailed musical activity will cease.

But only for the moment. For, in spite of my desire to contribute to the real and "practical" needs of the day at this time, in spite also of possibly forfeiting the respect of certain good citizens, newly-won because I can actually do something "useful," I must here state that I am a musician before anything else. I must say that I believe music is neither a polite accomplishment nor a mysterious gift vouchsafed only a few wild-haired creatures, but part of every moment of existence. Music is a philosophy of life, a point of view, a way of living. It can do more to regenerate a sick and weary world than many remedies now put forth by politicians, economists and other worthy folk. We teachers know that to inculcate knowledge truly, we must begin with the pupil and not the subject. We must begin with the boys and girls who become our men and women and make them learn, from the earliest moment, what democracy, freedom, happiness are. We must bring back the young people who have lived in

the hell of battle and carefully re-teach them what values there are in peace and inner quiet. We must not have the restless post-war spirit of the 1920s. It only breeds disaster.

That is why I, as a musician and a teacher, must write this little book. To remind myself and others like me that however gratifying it is to fit in at the moment of material need, our job is bigger, broader, less tangibly satisfying than being a scientist or an engineer but, in its way, just as essential. To have a flourishing American culture, built upon the foundations of European and Asiatic cultures, we must be the medium through which our young people re-see the past and courageously face the future.

I am going to tell you a little about myself. Not that I want to write my autobiography. I am not old enough or famous enough to justify such a step, nor have I met enough celebrities. But you will ask yourself, "Who is this David Barnett, who is so confident of his eligibility as a teacher?" And I ought tell you enough of my background to prove my eligibility. I hope I shall convince you.

According to my mother, she was aware, when I was three years old, that I had unusual musical ability. Since this unusual manifestation had not occurred before in her solid middle-class background, she pondered the phenomenon and, unable to solve its problems, took me, when I was five or six, to play for Josef Hofmann. To his great credit, that eminent gentleman, a former prodigy, advised against the ex-

ploitation of my admitted talent. Impressed by his advice, my mother permitted me a normal childhood, and my schooling and musical studies proceeded side by side. Many others, however, at one stage or another of my childhood, advised public concerts. But before too much pressure was brought to bear, I took the decision in my own hands and announced that I was going to college and would postpone my musical debut until after I had taken an academic degree.

My "normal" boyhood had permitted interest in sports and radio, in drawing and carpentry. At Columbia University, I was accompanist for the glee club and writer of songs for varsity shows, played on the tennis team and contributed to *Morningside* and *Spectator*. From the confused memories of four busy, often hectic years (I was studying music outside of college, too), I still cherish pleasant thoughts of Professor Edman, who encouraged my pianistic efforts, and Professors Mason and Moore, who have been unremitting in their interest and kindness all the years since my graduation. Toward the end of my college career, another student and I undertook to reform all that was wrong with the artistic world. Of that venture I can only say that young people must learn never to reform anything by telling what is wrong with it. If it were not the will of the majority for a situation to exist, it would not exist. That is not to say I advise idealistic youth to condone evil or corruption; the world does depend on its citizens for its betterment. But do not try to reform by loud lamentation. Only by teaching and watching and

waiting and re-education can it be accomplished. Never single-handed. However, the *Fortnightly* had many sound musical ideas. It won us praise for our courage, and only among the meager and paltry was any spite or anger maintained against us. So we "got off" easier than our brash youth deserved, and it was a better way for two energetic young men to spend their allowances than on hip flasks or cheap women.

My technical musical education, which was keeping pace with my other activities, was equally varied. I studied at the Mannes School with Howard Brockway. He taught me both piano and composition in his inimitable manner. Then I studied piano with Berthe Bert, composition at Curtis with Scalero, composition at Juilliard with Rubin Goldmark, classes in Paris with Alfred Cortot (after World War I, almost all music students went to Paris) and some special lessons with him, work with Dukas and also (a "must" with every American of the '20s) a few classes conducted by Nadia Boulanger. From it all, I emerged with a vast sense of confusion. My education had been expensive and varied. I had learned much from my teachers and I had gained much from my associations with people and with ideas in college. But because of the peculiar nature of my gift, the career upon which I was to embark had an exotic and outré tinge. It was perfectly reasonable for my classmates to become lawyers and doctors or to sell bonds or insurance. But an A.B. degree is not the usual background of a virtuoso. Music has not slipped into the "solid" professions yet—or it had not

then. And conversely, for those who considered schooling to be foreign to the language of musical performance, the grammar of the "academic" was distasteful.

Throughout the next eight years—the years which crystallized for me my conviction that art, if it is to persist and flourish, must have a place in education side by side with all the "practical" subjects—I must thank a benevolent Deity for His kind watching over my career.

I made a début in Paris and was buoyed up by the enthusiastic audience and the customarily superlative reviews, given with French wisdom and generosity to young performers—especially Americans—who had so much to learn. There was some question as to whether I was to be best known as a pianist or a composer; so with youthful enthusiasm I became both at once. And a teacher, too. Strangely enough, whatever my inner struggles in both performance and composition, my enthusiasm for teaching and my "feeling" for my students' problems gave me most frequently the conviction of the ever-increasing necessity of a definite place for music in a material world. To the faint horror of my long-suffering parents, I spent much time preparing for my students, took on more than I should have (especially the musically interested ones who were unable to pay well), and devoted hours preparing lectures for the series I was giving at the French School in New York. However, and again thanks to my good Guardian, I was able to appear as soloist with several "major" orchestras, such as L'Orchestre Symphonique de

Paris, the Cincinnati and St. Louis Orchestras, and some "minor" ones I shall not name for fear of hurting their feelings by placing them in such a category. My compositions were published by Senart in Paris and a good number of them performed by myself and others, notably the New York Philharmonic, which played a "Divertimento" of which I am rather fond, and the Perolé and Arion chamber music groups. I also gave yearly recitals in Carnegie Hall and Town Hall and went on tours which took me south and west, where many ladies, in many different American accents, inevitably requested the "Black Key" Étude. The critics of my performances out-of-town were invariably enthusiastic, and in New York they gave me good enough reviews to encourage me and bad enough reviews to keep me from getting a swelled head. What young performer can ask more?

I think I was fortunate. The years of the Depression, which discouraged so many, dealt with me more than kindly. Here again I can say it was my students and their problems, both artistic and personal, which really gave me my greatest satisfactions. Then, a portrait by Memling, the Flemish painter, started me on an interesting side road of musical wandering. I noticed that the keyboard was arranged in the same way then that it is now. Since music and indeed the sound of the instrument itself have changed so much since that time, I wondered if some device might not be invented to facilitate the technical considerations of pianistic performance. Thus one could be free to concentrate the

study of the piano upon the intrinsically musical. Students would not be so bogged down by the necessity of digital and muscular perfection that they would become intent just on overcoming technical difficulties or would give up music altogether or be content with slipshod playing.

Thus was the Enharmonic Pianoforte Keyboard conceived—and again my bewildered but kindly muse helped me more than I deserved. For I took the drawing and the idea to Steinway & Sons and received from them the help which changed the little model to an actual keyboard and the interested group of Mr. Greiner, Mr. Bilhuber and others to a series of demonstrations for many noted musicians. I gave the demonstrations at Steinway Hall and also one at the Juilliard School. I conducted an experimental study at Horace Mann School and met with instant and enthusiastic response from the children and parents. Miss Atkinson and Miss Flagg were good enough to arrange schedules so that I could teach children on the keyboard and prove not only that it was possible to transfer knowledge from one keyboard to another but that the new keyboard actually facilitated the conquest of their technical difficulties. I gave six concerts at Columbia's McMillin Theatre on the Enharmonic Keyboard and a Town Hall recital. Since the tone of the piano is in no way altered, neither is the choice of music nor its edition. Of the keyboard I have only this to say. It is part of the larger plan to bring music into the ken of the ordinary,

so-called "untalented" group of students. It is a device to promote greater musical understanding by overcoming more quickly certain technical difficulties. If the difficulties could be overcome just as easily on the existing keyboard, then there would be no problem. It is never an instrument or a keyboard or a device that is important in itself. It is the essence of music, the philosophic, intellectual, psychic and emotional kernel which is music, that is vital to preserve.

In spite of modest successes, my interests were being drawn further and further away from the ordinary activities of my profession. The Horace Mann classes absorbed and delighted me. The pupils progressed so rapidly and happily and their parents were so patently astonished at their enthusiasm that my attention was turned to the primary and secondary school as an environment of musical study. When an opportunity arose for me to teach in a Connecticut school and at Wellesley College and I knew that I could have students from an early grade until their graduation from college, I decided to concentrate permanently on that branch of my activities. It meant moving out of New York and out of the pleasant, rather hectic atmosphere of concerts and reviews and meetings of the "Bohemians" music club and musical evenings with delicious suppers served after them by the expert cooks of socially prominent ladies and gentlemen who like music. I was warned that I would quickly be forgotten. Well, perhaps. But my wife was willing and several

people who were interested in my musical progress understood, notably discerning Mrs. G. who has done more for the cause of music in New York than many others less inclined to anonymity. My parents had so enjoyed having a son who was "known" and had waited long and patiently for my career to flower. They were a bit wistful. If I had been failing, there would have been relief. But to go just when—ah well! children have strange notions. However, I believe my youngest sister is making up for my defections. Wild horses could not take her from her beloved musicians' haunts. And she is quite right to follow what she loves best as I am right to follow what I consider my work in life.

In the ensuing sections of this book, I wish to speak of music education and its place in our post-war world. I will illustrate by my experiences and by examples of compositions of both children and adults. Then I will go back to my work or to whatever service the future may bring.

Let me say just one more thing about myself. In the last seven or eight years I have done more pianoforte playing than ever before and have written more music, both for the immediate use of my students and in keeping with my own musical development. I have solved to my own pianistic satisfaction many technical and musical problems and thus have been able to give to my students the results of my own artistic maturing. I have been so fortunate as to have several more of my piano pieces published, a group of songs beautifully sung and chamber music beautifully performed. The

students who have graduated are beginning to come back and I am helping them to teach what they have learned. After the war, I hope this tendency will increase. But you have heard enough about me—now about music.

Chapter Two

Before I speak specifically of my work at Wellesley College and at the Thomas School, I would like to make a few observations about the place of music in the general curriculum of both private and public schools and about the attitude towards musical talent.

Until rather recently, it was widely believed that music study was meant for those who were especially talented in that direction. For the remainder it was a rather haphazard affair. The vitality of the musical curriculum depended upon the individual qualities of the grade teachers and even they were timid about espousing the cause of a subject which they felt had little "practical" value and which, besides, needed to be presented by "experts."

In this way, a strange and quite paradoxical situation arose. The child who evinced interest in or talent for music was given, at the earliest possible age, instruction in a specific skill relating to music. It usually took the form of piano, violin or voice lessons, less often 'cello or viola lessons, least often lessons in woodwind or brass instruments. As the child progressed in his skill on the instrument, he was required to devote more time to it. Obviously, this activity took place outside of school, and as the school curriculum itself became more complicated and the child's interests

widened socially, there was an inevitable conflict between practicing and homework or play. Thus, most frequently at high school age, he either dropped his music altogether or chose to intensify a special study of it. In the former case, he payed no further attention to serious music and found an outlet in cheap popular songs and dances. Or he tried from time to time to "go back" to studying. If a wise teacher caught him on one of these excursions into the past, he was re-directed, and he found a mature and integrated place for his musical yearning. If he were less fortunate in his instructor, he querulously began to find fault with his own capacity: he would complain that his fingers had become stiff, that he had lost his knack of fluent reading, that he "had no technique." So he went to the recitals of virtuosi who never make technical errors and lost the spirit of the composition in an admiration of the perfectly played arpeggio. Or he entered upon fault-finding over pedalling or finicky details and, in general, developed an overcritical, half-envious and wholly unsatisfying obsession about music and musical performance.

If, on the contrary, the young student chose to intensify his study of music, he found himself somewhat isolated from his classmates. The pursuit of skill meant spreading out high school or college studies over an extra year or two or dropping formal education at the legal minimum or stopping school altogether in order to practice exclusively. He found, too, that as his skill increased, he had to compete in the complicated and

often confusing environment of the professional musician, and there, after many years of heartache and self-denial and physical effort and strain, he was told he had "technique but no interpretation," another way of saying he did not possess musical talent. With masterful irony, the pursuit of skill which had prompted separation from his fellows at an earlier age later became the very reason for his undoing, at what should have been a culminating moment of reward. The obvious disadvantages of either of these choices need not be discussed here. What should we do about musical talent? What is musical talent? Who possesses it? How can one tell whether it is present?

I do not wish to talk about the many psychological and musical tests and devices which endeavor to answer these questions. I have written a book in which the various theories are summarized, their histories given and their values estimated. But this little book is only a reminder of my musical rôle, with whatever few musical achievements I might have accomplished as illustration.

So I am going to ask you to accept a rather startling statement which, moreover, I have proved to be true again and again: Every child has musical talent and under the proper conditions, every child can learn to sing, to read music, to compose and to play an instrument. This need not interfere with the remainder of his school work nor need preparation take more time than typical study of languages or mathematics. Also, it can be included in the curriculum of any primary

and secondary school, not just conservatories devoted to so-called musical children.

If you have raised incredulous eyebrows at the foregoing statement, would you agree that every child likes to sing, has a feeling for rhythm, is sensitive to changes of mood and has instinctive feeling for musical continuity? If any of you have observed the behavior of very young children, you will admit that this is so. Well, I would say that musical talent is just that: the ability to achieve musical continuity. And all children manifest this to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, under proper conditions, this ability can be nurtured so that composition and sight reading and other heretofore "difficult" aspects of music education develop as naturally as English composition, language and science can.

I went to the Thomas School with this idea firmly implanted in my teaching consciousness. The results achieved there, the last seven or eight years, have more than confirmed the validity of that belief.

The children in this school are not chosen for any specific musical capacity, although they are selected with some care. They come from homes where music has a place. In some cases, a great deal of time is spent on music and at concerts; in other homes, different interests take a more prominent place. Some of the children study instruments outside of school; many do not. They pursue a full and exacting curriculum because most of the graduates go on to college, and the school is justly proud of the good record of the students in meeting the requirements of college entrance. I do not

spend every day at the school—indeed, I live in Wellesley and travel to the school but once a week. Yet the musical accomplishments of this group of children seem extraordinary to outsiders. They themselves have absorbed very happily and painlessly, throughout the long period from the early grades to college entrance, a conversance with singing, playing and composing which seems no more unusual to them than their ability to translate a foreign language or pass a difficult examination in physics or write an English composition of several thousand words. When they go to college, they find it easy and pleasant to enter into musical activities. Some, not all, major in music, but all feel that it has a place in their general education and culture. When they come back to the school to visit, one can see their various attitudes settling. A good many have allotted a large share of their time to participating in some way in music; others have branched out in different directions. But for each, music is a part of daily existence. Bach chorales can be sung on the return ride from a picnic. A wedding or similar home festival can be the occasion for composing a song or a dance. Understanding and depth and honest critical discernment will be manifested when they listen to music. And please understand—these children were not overtaught nor were they even brilliantly taught. They only received, at *their* right moments, the guidance necessary to all learning. Most important, *their own natural inclinations* and curiosities were the materials of study, not a preconceived program stating how much

abstract material must be imbibed from grade to grade. The subject of music was never taught. The child was taught and his own musicality developed and guided.

I have been at some pains to emphasize the fact that a good number of these children would have ordinarily passed as "untalented." Similarly, when a decision to study an instrument was arrived at, it has been a natural consequence and not the result of an outside event. These children feel that the study of music is given a real place in their daily school lives and that it has an equal importance with all other subjects. They put the extra time needed in developing their instrumental or vocal abilities into its proper category. It will not be time *away* from ordinary studies nor activity which alienates and sets them apart from other children (like the very pathetic infant prodigy). Rather is the activity of practicing an extension of their natural work and play, and they give extra time to it just as the child interested in literature will read a great deal or the child interested in botany will spend hours outside of school collecting and assembling specimens. Then, too, the fact that music is already a part of the daily routine makes coming to the instrument not an alien, remote activity but simply a different phase of a familiar subject. Not the least among the benefits derived from these conditions is the assurance that the leaven of understanding will be present at the moment of acquiring skill.

When a young person plans to make music his profession, I cannot urge too strongly to let him wait until

his general education is completed and until he is mature enough to bring to his performance, his composition, or his teaching, understanding and skill which have developed side by side throughout the years of his childhood and adolescence.

And now I wish to return to the children themselves. I could not truly estimate their capacities that lovely Connecticut October when I first met them. I was determined to bring out in each the latent feeling for musical continuity and I studied each child and his background before attempting to create the conditions which would be most favorable. To obtain a fundamental and untroubled reaction to music, the personality itself must be stirred, and I knew that the high road to the personality was through the imagination.

The folk-song offered the logical medium of approach. For it bears the same relation to art-song or art-composition (and in the same ratio) as the highly complex nervous system of the child does to adult understanding and consciousness. Therefore, the folk-song, although not really simple, has a certain basic acceptance of the complexities of music which simplifies them for the child.

In keeping with the all-important place of imagination, the song is presented as an idea. In this the folk-song itself ably assists since both the words and the music support the same definite objective: a story is told, a pleasure extolled, a moral preached. The returning soldier recounts his deeds and adventures or bewails his false love; the farmer boy hails the joys of

the country and considers a crown a poor exchange; the lady leaves a Scottish castle for life with the gypsies. The songs follow the sailor through strange lands, attend his many loves, announce his exploits and weep over his end beneath the sea. Each nation, too, has its predominant character and its special historical occasions: it is maritime or agrarian (sea chanteys, planting and harvest songs); its heroes have resisted invasion or gloriously conquered (national and occasional songs). The particular nation will express a characteristic attitude which ranges from sentiment to irony (from the lullaby to the model but unfortunately mythical king). What child is not interested in stories of adventure and life in other lands?

Once the imagination is stirred, the song is sung as a complete musical performance. That is, it is sung completely in character, with all the enrichment that an accompaniment can provide. Mistakes will occur and some phrases will leave the singers behind. But much less often than one might expect. For singing, in the subtle way which perhaps first prompted it, lends reality to past events. And each child will call on hidden resources to give life to the past, something we can all do when it has meaning for the present. Then the song is left and one goes on to another activity. Only when it is re-sung, days later, does the process which overcomes mistakes and provides complete mastery begin. Here the same attitude is maintained. No attempt is made to eradicate errors by sheer repetition or by "taking the song phrase by phrase." For now the song

becomes the product of an actual person and the discussion centers on how he set about to write it. Step by step, the teacher's power of analysis leads the child along the fascinating path of music and poetry. He is intrigued to discover that the composer used simple, limited and recognizable musical materials. Before long, like any child on a country walk, he is far ahead of you, pointing out the use of the same motif here and there and employing with freedom and understanding the terms you have carelessly dropped.

Indeed, the imagination is the most powerful instrument of learning, and once the child is set on a road where it can play freely, he will far outdistance you. I remember asking two children, as a device, to sing alternately the verses of *Will ye gang to the hielands, Leezie Lindsay?,* since singing in duet form would well illustrate the reality of the question and reply. Before I knew it, both were out of their chairs, not simply singing the words but enacting the whole scene with all the simpering gestures and mock recalcitrance of which the malice of childhood has such mastery. Yet the joke was not entirely on Leezie because, to the huge enjoyment of their classmates, the suitor was a head shorter than the prospective bride and the latter a typical tomboy liberally besprinkled with freckles.

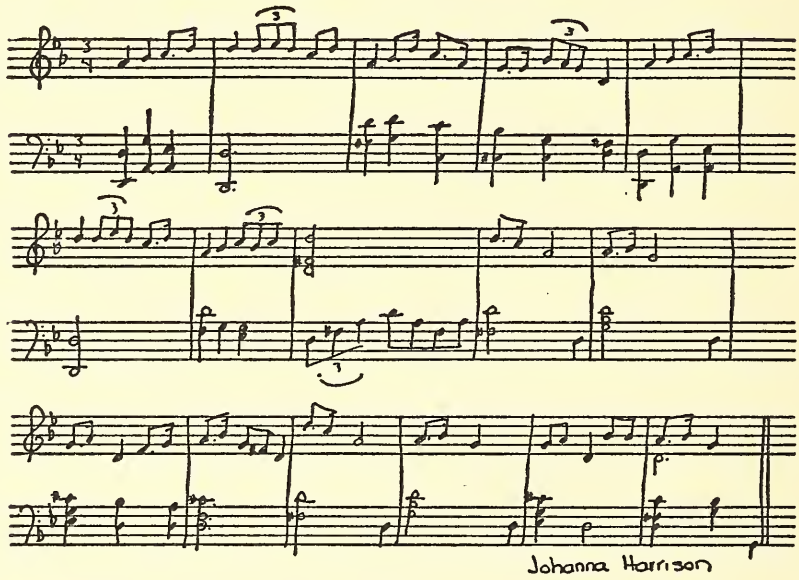
Step by step one proceeds from the known to the unknown, and the unknown is never quite that by the time one reaches it. As the formalities of acquaintance are overlooked in the heat of the game, so the rush of the imagination makes easy companions of forbidding

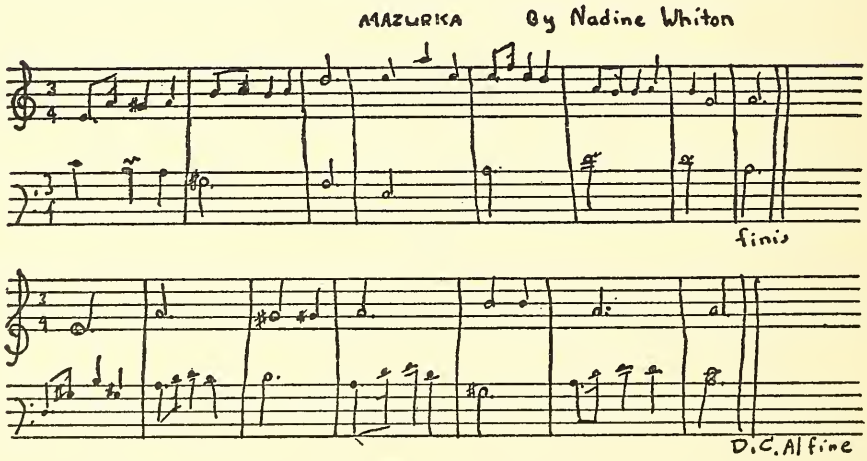
terms. This is just as true in composing music as in singing, and it has the effect of removing the forbidding reputation composing has acquired as well as the halo of mystery with which, for some reason, it has been endowed. When the song has been seen as an idea and the composer as a human and rational being, the child experiences a natural desire to try his hand at writing music. Again the teacher prepares the way by stimulating the imagination. The Mazurka, for example, is presented first as a national dance of Poland and than as a musical composition. The dance begins with a general circular formation from which particular couples periodically advance for solo steps. These solo episodes are in the nature of pantomimes that have undying patriotism as their subject. Children are generally familiar with folk-dancing and it is not difficult to explain new steps to them. They will see the point and design of a Mazurka as readily as those of a Jig or a Minuet. Given understanding of the dance, sheer curiosity leads naturally to the discussion of the Polish people and their sad history. Today, Poland seems even less remote to the child than heretofore, and it is conceivable that in the closely-knit world of the future, children will speak as familiarly of foreign countries as they now do of neighboring states.

Only after the form of the dance is clear and after a sympathetic interest in the country of its origin is secured does one proceed to the actual music. Examples are played and various types differentiated: the melancholy, the pompous, the whimsical and the graceful.

As many as a dozen are presented and during the performance, if the teacher will look around, he will see

FIG. 1. TWO MAZURKAS

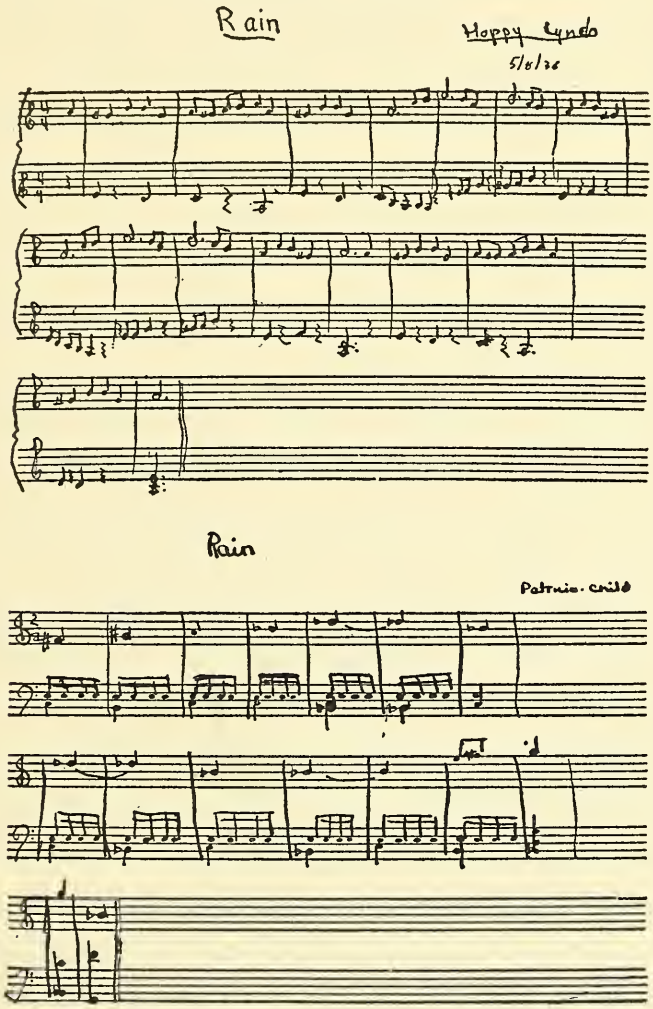




each child making a silent and solemn preference or he will actually hear, "I'm going to write one like that." It is a curious fact, as the accompanying exam-

ples show [*Fig. 1*], that the children reproduce not the shell of the project but the spirit itself. As if with the sureness of memory, they select unusual scales and in-

FIG. 2. TWO COMPOSITIONS WITH THE TITLE "RAIN"

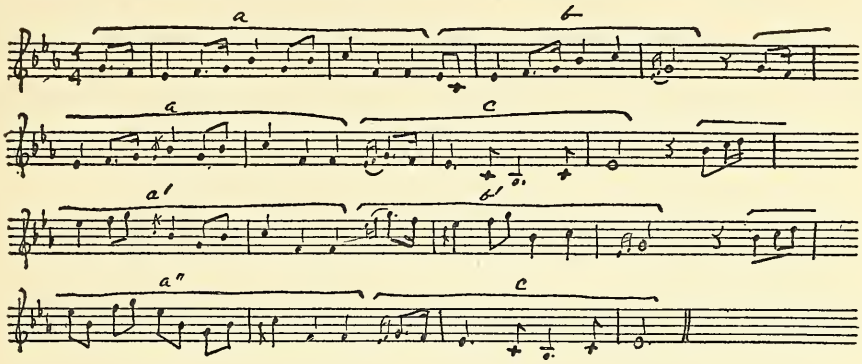


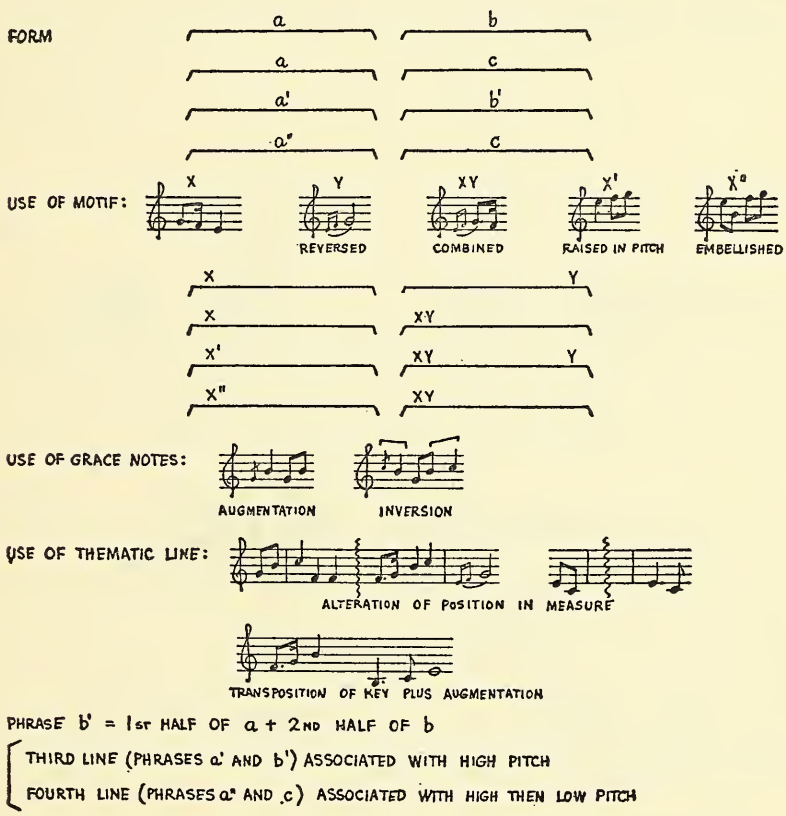
tervals. I once detected a Swedish strain in a child's song and found Swedish ancestry several generations back. But this is a subject for students of anthropology or of traces in the racial consciousness.

Children differ, too, in the types of attitudes they adopt during composition. *Fig.* 2 gives two examples submitted in response to the title, "Rain," a time-honored subject of musical composition. One child has caught a melancholy connotation of rain, chiefly through emotional channels. The other has seen a rainy day pictorially and has represented a desolate pitter-patter rhythmically and through selection of the harmonies. It is this permission to differ which music grants and which is so freeing to the spirit. Its patterns are so flexible that they bend easily to the needs and interests of all types of minds. And these examples, typical among hundreds, must make us pause in our estimates of musical talent. For we have too long assumed that musical talent is discovered by having everybody do the same thing and seeing who does it better.

One final comparison before leaving the subject. When one looks closely at a folk-song, its structure becomes apparent. The materials are employed and re-employed, interlocked and combined, with an economical sureness of purpose. *Fig.* 3 illustrates this point diagrammatically. Well, the compositions of children have this same hold on musical continuity, and when one reflects that the composer of folk-song, by definition, is not a trained musician, the powers shown by the children find a certain analogy. Observe in *Fig.* 4 the grasp on musical continuity which the diagram outlines. Year in and year out, time and time again, I have watched the analogy between the child- and the folk-composer draw closer and closer, by repeating the

FIG. 3. ANALYSIS, IN DIAGRAM FORM, OF A SCOTTISH TUNE

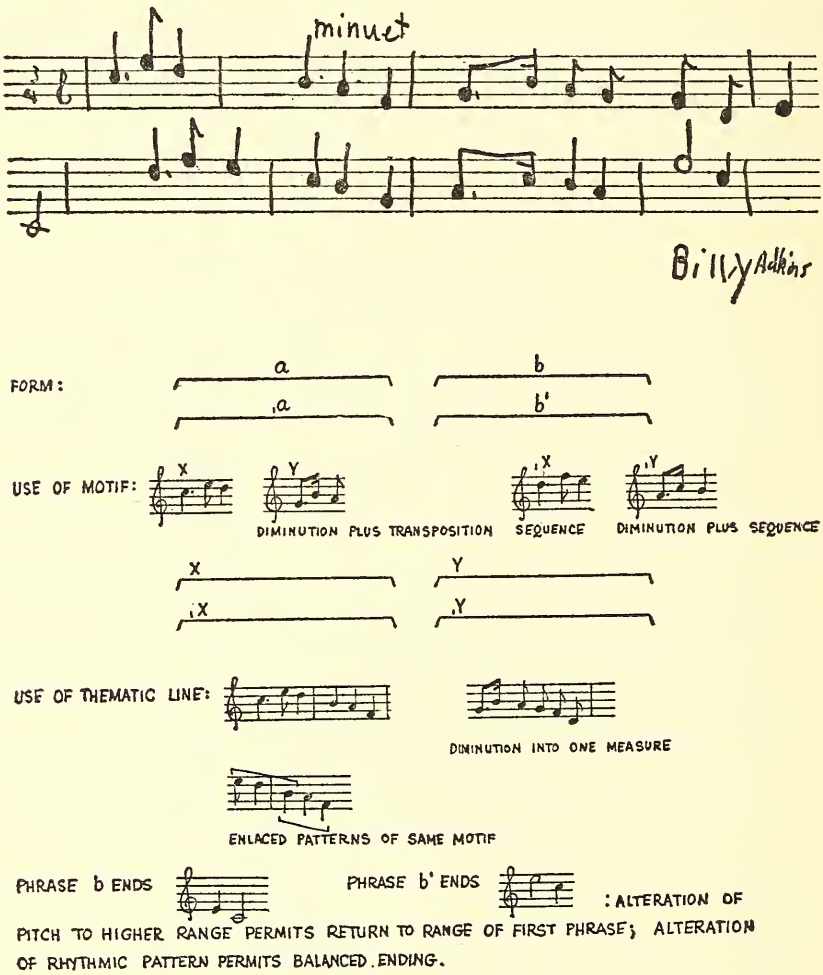




following particular experiment. I have selected two closely matched groups. To Group A I have explained a project according to the procedure described above. With Group B I have done the same but, in addition,

pointed out the nature of sequences, motifs, inversion of motif, suspensive phrases, in short, those factors which comprise the means whereby musical continuity

FIG. 4. ANALYSIS, IN DIAGRAM FORM, OF A CHILD'S MINUET



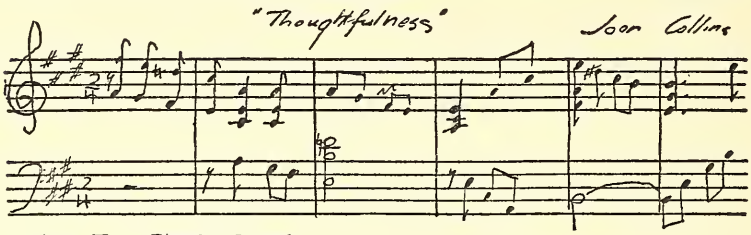
is achieved. In every case, Group A achieved musical continuity successfully and *used, without previous explanation, the devices* which were explained to Group B. In the course of time, naturally, all the children be-

come conversant with these and many other devices of musical structure. But the point of the experiment is never lost: there is latent musical ability in every child which must be reached and tapped before it is trained and developed.

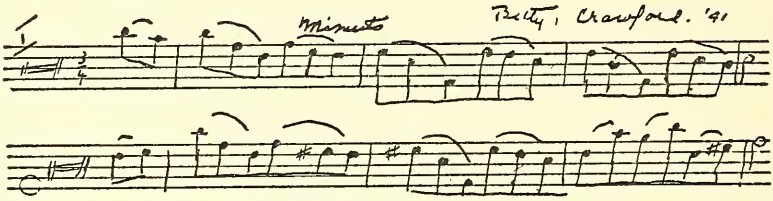
When the parents saw their children busily writing Mazurkas or Minuets, when they saw them develop further and write compositions expressing a mood or illustrating a poem, when they heard them sing with ease and enjoyment Bach chorales and other so-called difficult songs, when they heard them casually discussing the mysterious symbols of music and employing them with understanding, when they saw all this, they wondered, "Are my children musical wonders?" "No," we replied—to be sure, somewhat untactfully but truthfully—, "every child has ability to write music." A bit timidly, they asked, "Would I?" "Yes, if the proper conditions are present." "What are the proper conditions?" "We shall see."

And they did. The children write scores of compositions each year, they sing with church choirs and over the radio, they perform a Bach cantata each year and many study different instruments with increased interest; this in addition to their regular school work, sports, recreation and other free activity. The parents and other members of the community write and perform their own compositions, they sing a major choral work each year, sometimes alone, sometimes with the children, the instrumentalists among them come for evenings of chamber music during which music is

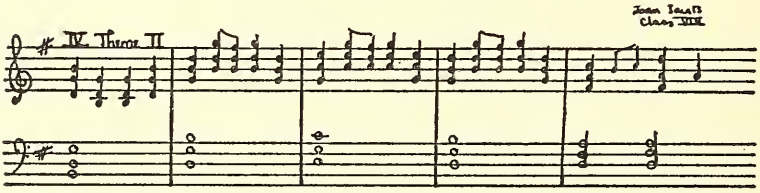
FIG. 5. TYPICAL EXCERPTS FROM THE COMPOSITIONS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS



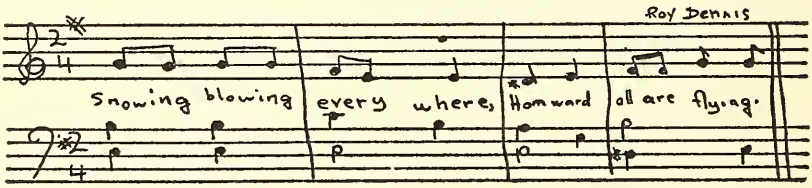
CLASS X.- PIANO PIECE



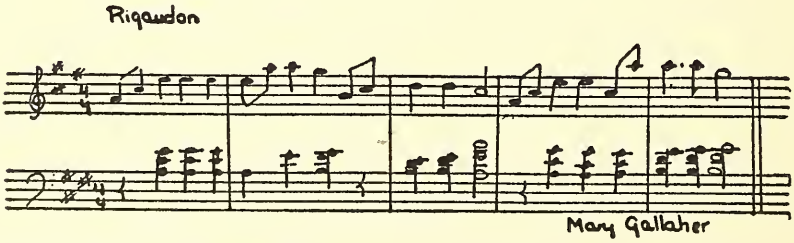
COURSE 102 - GIVEN BY ME AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE - MINUET FOR VIOLA



CLASS VIII. - SECOND THEME FROM A SONATINA



CLASS VI: - SONG



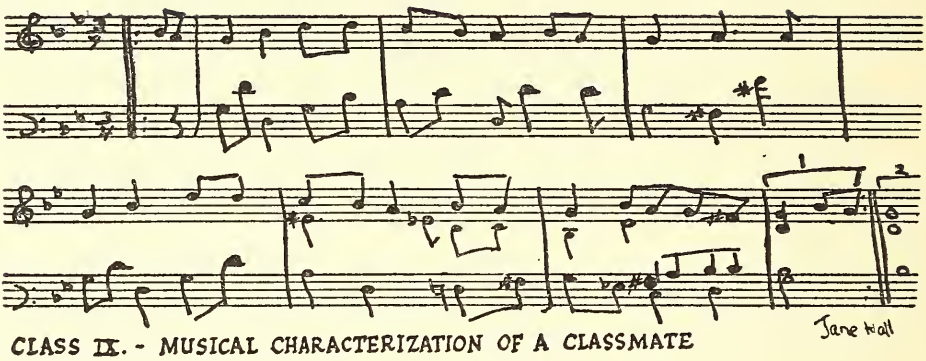
CLASS XI. - RIGAUDON

played, analyzed and discussed; this in addition to their busy lives as parents and in their work or professions. (See the typical excerpts in *Figs. 5, 6, 7* and *8,* on pages, 34, 36, 37, 38.)

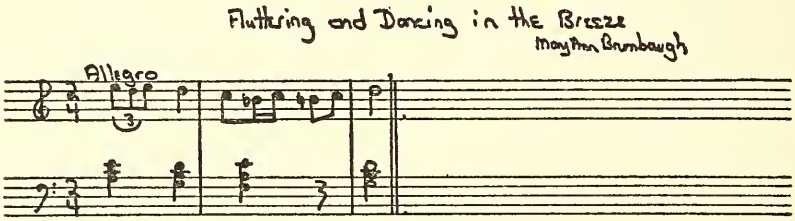
From time to time, there have attended the Sunday night classes at the School: teachers, Miss Thomas herself, who has written some admirable compositions, a lawyer, a doctor, a minister, an engineer, a publisher, a novelist, mothers who had renewed their interest in music, fathers who had found again their college interest in singing and members of local and neighboring church choirs.

Ordinarily, were any other field the subject of study by such a group, rich in experience, background and training, anyone would readily understand that discussion would be lively, varied and profitable. Where music is concerned, however, there is a disposition to believe that these qualities are of no avail and that the adult must regress to some childhood stage for which there is now neither time nor patience. A little reflection shows how false this is. These people, as we all do, led their lives to the accompanying sound of music and, like many others, also had an opportunity of longer or shorter duration during childhood to lay the foundations for life-long activity in music. But they came up against the same obstacles which still block the musical development of many children. They struggled with the questions of time for school studies and time for music study outside, of whether they were

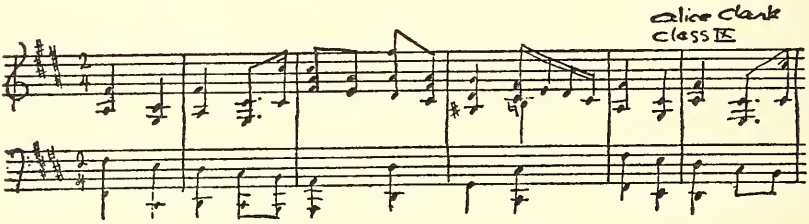
FIG. 6.



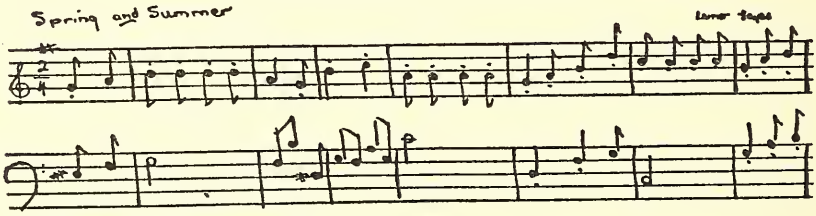
CLASS IX. - MUSICAL CHARACTERIZATION OF A CLASSMATE



CLASS VII. - MUSICAL MOTIF FOR A LITERARY PHRASE



CLASS IX. - THEME FOR VARIATIONS



CLASS X. - IMPRESSION

FIG. 7

Longfellow — The Brooklet and the Wave — Ann Stewart

The Brooklet came from the mountain, As sang the bard of old

Running Running Run — Running Running Run — Running Running

CLASS VIII.- DUET WITH PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT

Moment Musical — M. Middleton '22

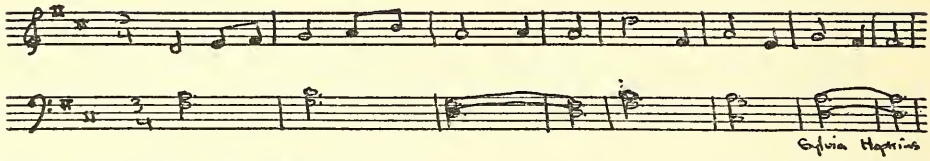
COURSE 102 - GIVEN BY ME AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE

saw a-bove a sea of hills — A sol- i- ta- ry pla-net

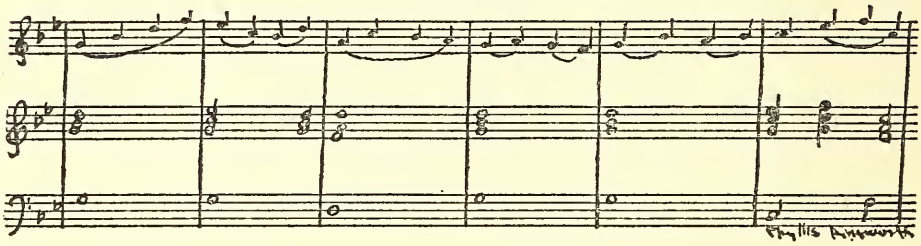
Ruth B Judson

ADULT COMPOSITION CLASS - SONG BY ONE OF THE PARENTS

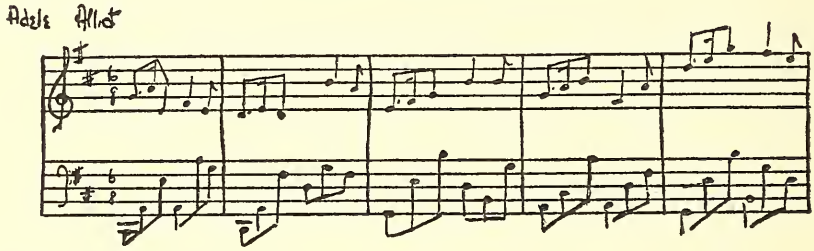
FIG. 8.



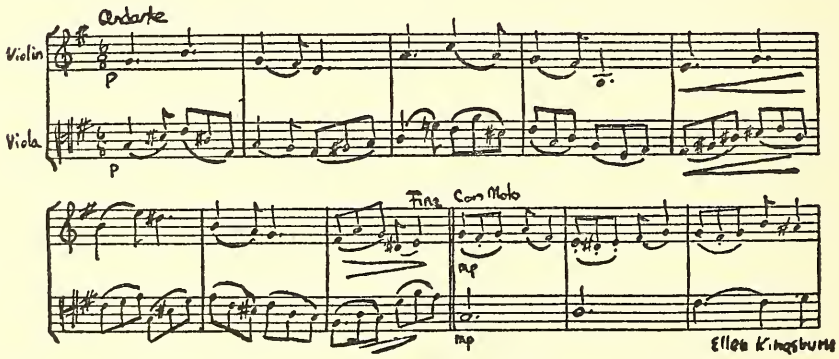
CLASS IX.- THEME FROM A DANCE



CLASS IX.- PIECE FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO



CLASS XI.- SICILIANO



CLASS X.- PROGRAM PIECE FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA

"talented enough for serious study." Or perhaps they encountered the typical rejection as "untalented." Consequently, in the adult resumption of music study, there is no need for a hasty mastery of so-called essentials. There is need rather to overcome the effect of early experiences and this is accomplished in the course of time and by simple encouragement.

As with the child, the concern is first with the personality and the imagination and only secondarily with the materials of music. If the adult imagination plays less freely than the child's, it more than makes up for this in intensity and direction. Besides, it has withstood the test of application to reality in another field—the work or profession—and gained a certain hardihood and power of selection. That is why adults can quickly begin to work with combinations of instruments and larger forms. *Fig. 9* shows a passage from a composition by Miss Thomas for a small orchestra. It has captured a spirit which only a sensitive observer of nature's changing moods could have detected. Sometimes, the imaginative idea can best be expressed by complexities of structure. *Fig. 10* presents two passages from a string quartet by Mr. Adkins. Note how an augmentation of the first passage is developed in the second. Each individual brings to musical composition his entire attitude of mind and sometimes the very materials of his own environment. In *Fig. 11* an excerpt from Dr. Simon's suite, *The Country Doctor,* is shown. A dialogue is in progress over the telephone

Sea Turn

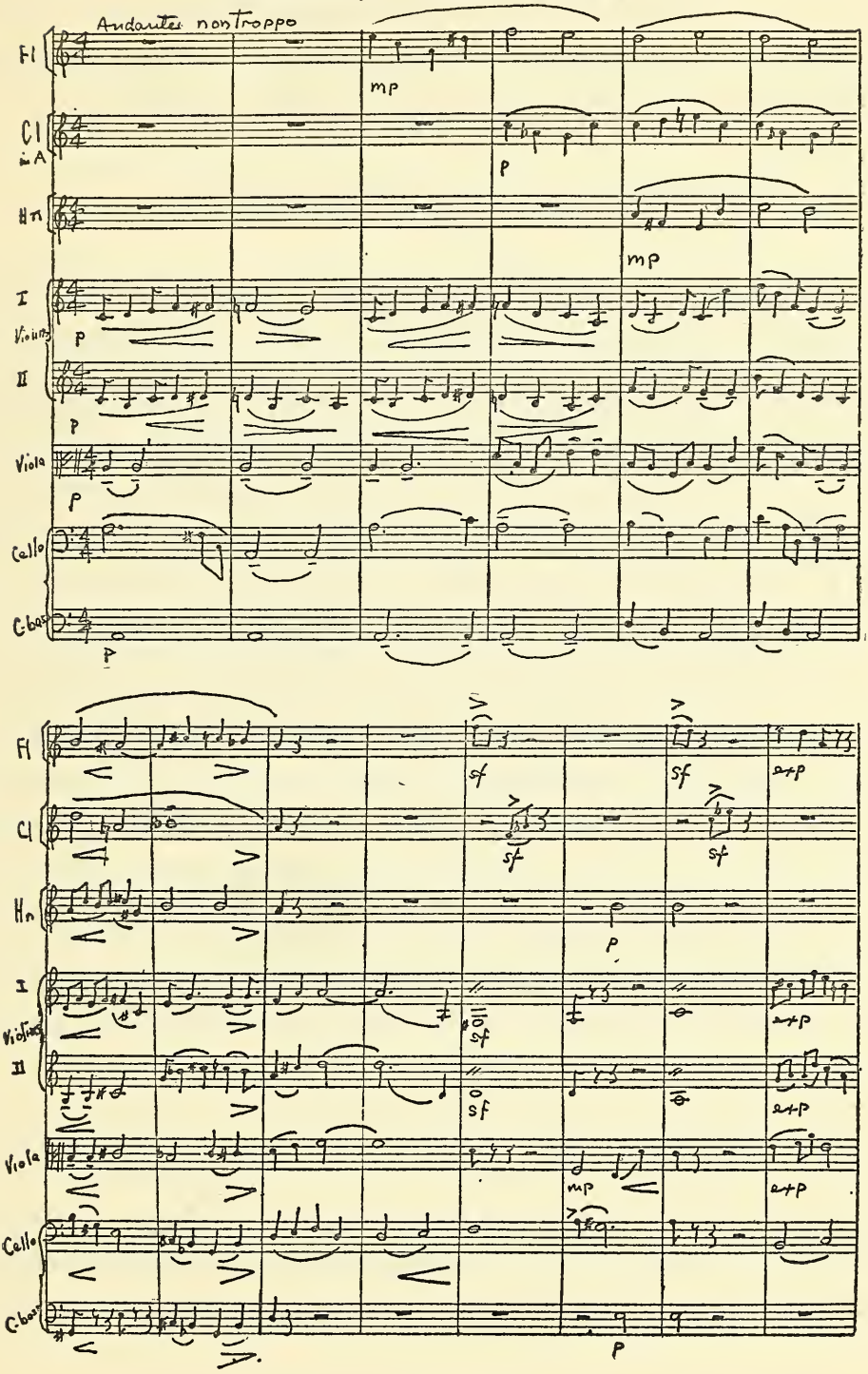
The fog creeps up with stealthy, salt, wet breath
To blind the busy traffic of the sea.
The ships blast out their hoarse and plaintive cries
And grope with tautened senses, timidly.

The foghorn, roused, intones its rhythmic chant
Of knowing where it is with surety,
To answer those who ask Who comes? And Where?—
The terrified lost children of the sea.

The fog as softly melts before the sun.
The bleating boats make still their frantic cries.
The rhythmic pulse of work its beat renews.
The songs of those who toil at sea arise.

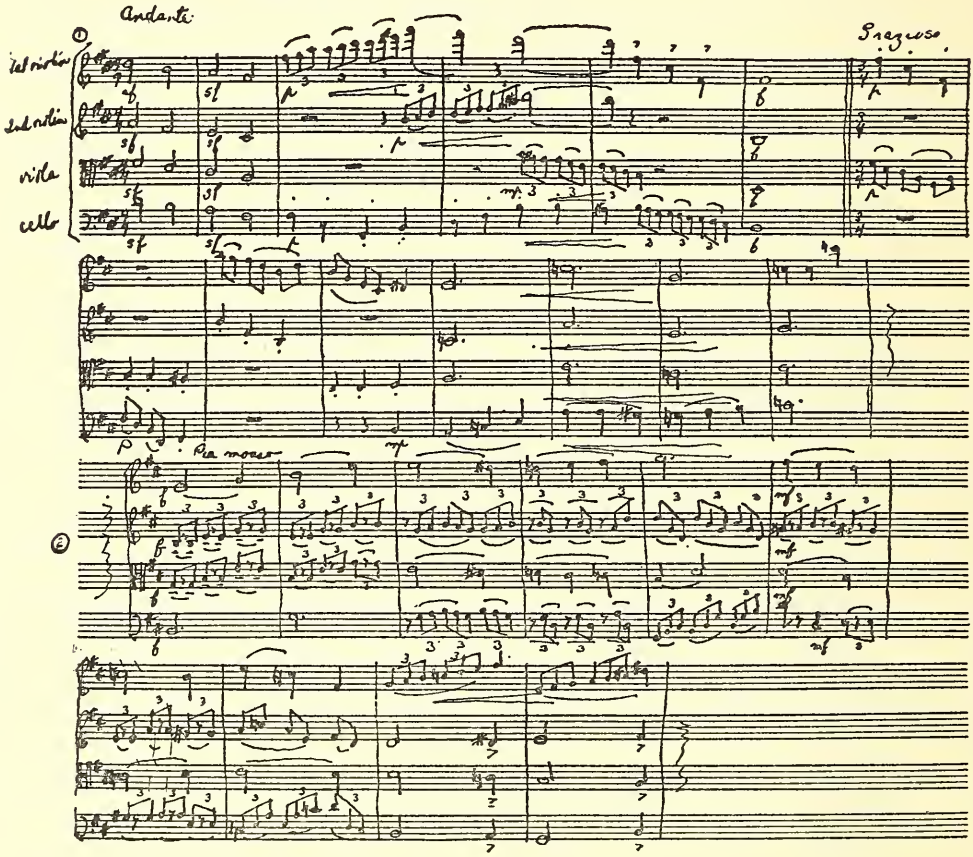
M. T., 1942.

FIG. 9. A PAGE FROM "SEA TURN," A COMPOSITION FOR SMALL ORCHESTRA, BY MABEL THOMAS



between an excited mother and the calm doctor. Observe the rôles of the instruments which have been selected. I am happy to report that the ensuing story-in-music shows his calm to have been justified.

FIG. 10.- TWO PASSAGES FROM A STRING QUARTET, BY LEONARD ADKINS



In singing, too, the adult personality can find expression without lengthy preliminaries. Here, the stature of the choral composition which is selected for performance offers the suitable scope that combinations of instruments and larger forms provide in writing

FIG. 11.- A PASSAGE FROM THE SUITE "THE COUNTRY DOCTOR", BY DR. LEO SIMON

music. As many as twenty or thirty compositions are sung at a singing group meeting. There is no intense "rehearsing" of a single phrase or practice of individual parts while the others wait. The songs are selected for

their bearing on one another, and the accompanying discussion is designed to bring this out externally while the same end is subtly achieved by the actual singing. Each rendition is an effort toward the total idea of the song, and while it may lag at first, the return in succeeding sessions is marked by continual progress. Terms are constantly introduced during discussion and before long become the accepted and familiar materials of music. It is not unusual for such singing to awaken a desire to compose and actually to lead to it.

The obvious result of all these gatherings was understanding and good will and general deepening of musical appreciation. Much of the unwholesome mystery of music and musical performance and composition has vanished. They have become less esoteric, less removed from normal spheres. Music has thus become more intimately part of their lives and something to be treasured even in times of war when emphasis is placed upon material existence by everyone. Our activities continued last year—often with difficulty—but continue they did. And both the singers and the composers told me that whatever time could be given to music proved helpful with tasks and anxieties.

I think that the community which has organized musical activity is not unique. Symphonic orchestras in many cities had such earnest beginnings, and participation by the people themselves is usual in numerous places, as Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, testifies. But this activity in Connecticut of which I have spoken sprang from purely educational projects: the children were

being taught. Everything had an educational basis. It was not an outlet. It was part of the learning process and it will continue and spread, with the school and its delightfully interested parents and friends as nucleus.

Chapter Three

My work at Wellesley College is very different from that in Connecticut. Each member of the music department has his own special place and work, and mine is the teaching of the piano in the branch of so-called "practical" music. The study of an instrument is voluntary and receives no academic credit. The possible disadvantages or even advantages of such a status are matters for executive policy and I do not feel it professionally ethical to comment upon them. However, since there is no compulsion and no academic credit and since war activities have required the students' extra time more and more, the fact that many of my students study the piano throughout their college course testifies again to the great urge of the individual towards expression in a musical medium.

For the student of the piano at college is very rarely planning to become a professional musician. As I have remarked, the factor of skill has tended to set the student apart during secondary school, so that by the time he reaches college age, he frequently leaves school entirely to devote himself to music study. This he does under private auspices or at a music school where most of the courses are in various branches of music, with a few periods devoted to literature or languages. It is rather amusing to note that the average music school

gives academic subjects the cavalier treatment that music often receives in ordinary schools.

The reasons why a college student studies the piano are many. She may have studied for many years and, without professional objectives, wish to make music a permanent part of her existence. That, I think, is the rarest type of student since it already betokens a matured evaluation, free of the conflicting issues which becloud the subject. Another student has felt the effect of these conflicting factors, which we have seen to be at their crucial stage in secondary school, and has not studied since. She is eager to return to the instrument but is confused and self-depreciatory. If at this moment the proper conditions are provided, a satisfying and lasting return can be effected. To the teacher who has watched the mechanics of the process whereby students become excluded from music, such rescues are especially gratifying. And it comes as no surprise to him that they frequently follow upon restoring to its proper focus a distorted view of the factor of skill in performance. Then there is the student interested in composition or music in general, who perhaps wishes to "major" in it and wants the piano as another branch of that interest or as a means of examining the music which forms the bibliography of the courses. Still another wishes to teach young children and anticipates the rôle of the piano in school life. There are those, too, who are already familiar with another instrument and who realize what an important part the collaborating piano has in its literature. Others choose the piano

for a variety of reasons which are too individual to require mention here.

With the knowledge of the particular objective and personal need which prompts each student to choose to study the piano, one can easily find which approach in instruction is best for each. Here again, the instrument and the notation for the instrument are never considered in themselves. The student and her individual musical needs come first. Whether a student comes to me with a concert repertoire or has never progressed beyond Book III of—well, never mind, this is of little moment save as affecting the type of study. The important thing is to have a good reason for studying the piano and a willingness to view study and practicing from an enriched musical point of vantage rather than in terms of the ten fingers. And when I say a "good reason," I do not mean only a practical one but an emotional or aesthetic or intellectual one as well. I think that almost everyone of my students at Wellesley approached the piano with a felt, inner need and they have more than justified my pride and hope in them. Many who write to me about their pianistic activities after graduation show they have absorbed more of the broader, more general attitude towards instrumental study than I thought they had while I agonized over them in the back of Billings Hall during their last student recitals. This is especially true when they teach young children the piano. Certain intangible difficulties and obscurities become crystallized when they must explain the elements of keyboard technique

to little Susie or wriggly Johnny. Their requests for help and the severity of their outlook give me a great deal of pleasure, for I know that, in teaching the piano, they will teach music not skill, and their work will further thin the ranks of those we have called the excluded.

I doubt if there is one method of teaching which can be trapped, caught and bound into text-book instructions. Rather is there a delicate and indefinable rapport during the learning process which is possible even to thrice-familiar materials when an attitude has given them particular meaning. When one feels, even after the student is out in the world, so to speak, that she has re-established this rapport with her pupils, one cannot but be reminded of another renewal of the learning process through the medium of the materials of music: the child composer's recreation of the past in terms of present significance. The same feeling can be savored, too, during the performance of a great work one has lived with and worked over for many years, when there comes a moment of blindingly clear comprehension of the composer's musical motivation and the projection of these emotions rouses the fingers. A slight turn or rustle in the audience reveals that the feeling has been caught and a magical rapport exists between composer and audience with the performer as a medium. This is always a moment of great joy to me when I experience it, and I am inclined to believe that the most valuable performance we can give is, in its final essence, a teaching.

Fortunately, the notion that time—the sheer amount of practicing—is the most important factor in instrumental study is becoming outmoded. This is but a sensible reaction to the familiar cry, "technique without expression," and correspondingly a growing conviction that a finger moved without comprehension means a movement lost to expression. Nor should it be believed that someone who has thoughtlessly acquired muscular proficiency needs only minimum guidance to turn it toward the purposes of interpretation. These considerations make welcome news to the college student who must naturally utilize time to the best advantage. And at the same time they explain why analysis and treatment of music for the piano as a literature occupy such a predominant place in the instruction. Since I have written in some detail, in my aforementioned book, my ideas on pianoforte performance, I shall merely mention casually the method by which I endeavor to carry out these aims.

For analysis and understanding, I give to the individual student the type of piano music which best suits her needs and development. There is very little "must" in the average repertoire in its original state. However, by emphasizing certain aspects of great music and pointing out not altogether obvious faults of lesser compositions, the taste is led quietly into the "must" paths. So that a student who has "adored" concert paraphrases and potpourris or more recent productions by less well-trained composers and has happy associations with performing them is not told brusquely

they are inferior but confronted with Beethoven and Chopin and Bach at the right moment. Of itself, the inadequacy of the "concert-piece" is revealed. It is important not to destroy good associations connected with any music and not to be didactic concerning what is good and not good. The musical taste of the student will improve with his cultural development. After all, those of us who now enjoy the subtleties of Proust would not wish to negate the enjoyment that scout and adventure stories once brought to us.

Since piano performance, in one of its main aspects, is a solo enterprise and since many of its attendant problems require individual attention, it is fitting that individual instruction be the traditional and customary mode of learning. Yet instruction which is exclusively individual is apt to have one great disadvantage: the student becomes absorbed in her own particular difficulties and loses sight both of the total aim of her studies and of music as a subject of study. To remove this disadvantage and to further more detailed analysis of the particular qualities and styles of piano music, a group gathers once a week. This is an entirely voluntary activity. Any one feeling the pressure of other work may at any time be absent from a meeting of this group. Nevertheless, the students seem to enjoy it and attendance has been good. They present for one another groups of compositions which, although by different composers, are unified by similar aims, forms or styles, and they actively participate in discussion. It is

here that many begin to look up from the keyboard into the broader scope of music.

The other goal which I set myself in the teaching of the piano to college students is at once easier and more difficult to achieve. Easier, because the student expects and wants instruction in the technique of performance; difficult, because the student most often has not made the connection between the understanding her cultural development permits her and the actual mechanics of playing. This difficulty is partially traceable to the interruptions, doubts and setbacks of primary- and secondary-school days. Every setback meant more or less starting over again and with the added burden of feeling the time between resumptions irretrievably lost. Under the spell of this feeling, an effort was made quickly to regain lost skill and make up for lost time. Attention centered on muscular matters and since skill cannot be suitably acquired save by imperceptible degrees, the incentive which prompted resumption soon flagged. Likewise, since concentration on skill independent of its roots in expression is a dull business, all remaining interest died and the stage was set once again for another interruption of study. During this difficult period, the student was continually beset by false incentives and false discouragements. Unprotected by early training, she lapsed into the common error of regarding the concert as the atmosphere toward which all musical activity strives and succumbed to the awe of technical accomplishment which is much too frequently fostered there.

Perhaps because of this very awe the student had not tried to apply, in a practical manner, the knowledge and understanding which she is constantly acquiring in artistic and other intellectual occupation. Once the direct connection between this cultural background and the method of study becomes clear, the student perceives the difference between a reading of notes which may have been characteristic in childhood and a mature concern with the structure of an artistic masterpiece. The belief that a dull and tasteless enterprise must precede the real concern with the music disappears. The student begins to find in the complexity of a musical passage the direct result of the epoch in which it was written and to employ a key to the epoch as a key to its music as well. Historical events, literary influences, social values, aesthetic theories, these become the answer to structural complexity. The musical structure, in the mind of the student, takes on a compound character which resolves down into components definable in terms of the familiar aspects of her general culture. She quickly rids herself of the idea that to negotiate it would require the fingers of a Houdini or a Horowitz. She discards vacuous practicing and assembles the elements of structure, the pure and clear materials of music enriched by the associations of a particular epoch. I have seen a "technique" develop in a year or two which seemed remarkable from the outside. It encouraged the student and marked a progress toward greater pleasure and understanding in playing. Yet it was never an end in itself and was but a logical

outcome. The finger which is moved with a sense of the rightness of design is sure and unfailing.

I think my piano students enjoy their work. I know I enjoy them.

Chapter Four

If you have been patient enough to follow me thus far, you will doubtless be thinking: But why? Why must he write to tell us all about himself, where he teaches and whom he teaches? Surely this country is music-conscious enough with its many fine orchestras and its large number of concerts. There are hundreds of good schools which devote time to music, and almost all colleges have choral groups and glee clubs, instrumental training and orchestras.

You are perfectly right. We have become increasingly conscious of music. There are many fine orchestras and splendid opportunities to hear good music of all kinds. But this book is a reminder, a reminder to myself and every other person who works with the materials of music that we have hardly begun the development of music because, to a far greater extent, we must increase in stature and quality the place of music in our daily life.

For many, it is still a thing apart. It still has no real place in the lives of a great many people. It is considered exotic, a rare thing, the exception. This seems hardly possible when one reflects that everyday life proceeds to the constant accompaniment of music. From the lullaby and song of childhood to the lament for the dead, music solemnizes or lightens every occa-

sion. The anthem, the prayer, the prologue, the interlude, the march, the dance, these are but a few of the offices performed by music. Yet there is apparently a great difference between the unconscious acceptance of a harmonious interlude and an active, vital fulfillment of a need of the personality. For when music is approached directly and emerges from behind the palms where it has filled the spaces in conversation, its truly awkward position in life becomes obvious. Then, as in the presence of an unpleasant visitor, we see the doubts and the stiffening, the antagonism and the conflicts. Some will advance with outstretched hand, but these are frequently the people of good breeding, trained in overcoming natural reluctance.

There has always been a time when every phase of human activity occupied a similar position. Not so long ago, it was not thought necessary that everyone should read and write and be able to do sums. These were the services of isolated individuals who performed them for peasant and aristocrat alike. And significantly, they were approached with a mixture of reverence and command. They possessed the key to certain mysteries but perhaps the very mysteriousness of their calling kept them segregated and apart. Not very long ago, too, medicine was the province of the leech, and before him, the witch. The respected profession of the doctor today bears little resemblance to these conditions of the past. But what is more important, the tenets of the profession have spread out and penetrated into all manner of nooks and crannies of everyday existence in the

form of preventive medicine, hygiene, first aid and general counsel on habits of eating.

I shall not belabor the point with the transition from alchemy to science, from the rod to the vote, from execution to psychiatry. It is more useful to note that each of these transitions was invariably accompanied by a mass acceptance of its implications. At first the activity remained dark and secret, known only to initiates, to be approached with mingled awe and mistrust. At the end of the transition, it is the familiar of everybody, and he who refuses to reap its benefits is looked upon with the same ridicule which greeted its first proponents. Well, the position of music with respect to the mass of people is still largely in the transition state. I say this despite the symphony orchestra and the radio and the great creations of Beethoven, Haydn, Schumann, Mozart, Chopin and Schubert which they play. For these very men are cases in point. All his life, Beethoven balked at and strove against abuses in the position of music. Haydn bewailed them. Mozart and Schubert wastefully poured out music into an environment which had no place for it. Schumann struggled to bolster the doubtful status of music with the activity of literature, and Chopin took refuge from the chic notoriety of the salon in melancholia and illness.

What is the attitude of mind which exists in the mass of people during the period of transition? And what steps must be taken before events signify that it has reached its end? First is the deep-rooted suspicion

which mistakenly allies the activity with the forbidden. Everyday life is and should be capable of providing satisfactions, but when an outlet is sought from the restrictions and tasks which inevitably surround it, the choice falls on activities which have not as yet achieved acceptance in the group consciousness. In the majority of instances, these activities hardly support the choice, for they are inherently as prosaic as the daily life left behind. But a notion of glamour attaches to them. The alchemist was undoubtedly a glamorous and Faustian figure but the followers who found his forbidden rites inviting and tasted of his noxious mixtures would have been completely cured by a good stiff course in modern physics or chemistry.

There is nothing glamorous about music. Its scales and chords are as everyday as breakfast cereal. It is simply an ingenious utilization of the compound nature of tones to lend them relation and so permit design. Life itself has mysteries and profundities, and some of these can be probed and solved by the peculiarly human knack of considering them in terms of design. But as long as musical materials are considered mysterious, an elaborate ritual can surround them and give rise to a cult of initiates and followers, with all its fuss and fuddy-duddy. There can be much bowing and scraping before the great, much swooning with mystic ecstasy, learned bandying of high-sounding and awe-striking terms, pontifical sounding on comparative performances, ohs and ahs and have-you-heards. A field of human endeavor, in direct proportion to the growth of its

reputation for glamour, can be the recipient of every stupidity, eccentricity and even more serious undesirability which other fields, safely through the transition stage, have long since discarded or no longer permit. Each new arrival in the field, who elsewhere would be received with calm into a common aim, is preceded by a fanfare and hailed as a messiah.

Secondly, during the period of transition, the mass of people accept with docility the legendary implications of talent. This, of course, adds new fuel to the fires of the idea of mystery. For what is more necessary to the maintenance of a cult than an apparently heaven-sent gift? To many people who turn from the cult with aversion, the musical prodigy comes as a convincing confirmation of what it maintains, however undesirably it may do so. It would be foolish to deny the existence of the musical prodigy just as it would be to ignore the prodigy in mathematics, languages and literature or even in sport. But it would be equally foolish to conclude from the phenomenon that all other children should cease studying the subject. The prodigy is not a confirmation of the mysterious nature of the subject. Is it not more sensible to regard him rather as convincing proof that the substratum of mind from which he quickly drew materials exists for all children, if not in equal intensity, at least in a less accessible manner? The subsequent history of many prodigies tends to answer this question in the affirmative. They frequently do not fulfill their early promise, a situation which is both sad and wasteful. Quite probably, the

musical stratum which first prompted the early manifestations in these cases was not properly tapped and developed. Superimposed upon it, instead, was a cultivation of attendant skills and dexterities which, coupled with natural intelligence and the strength of the original incentive, produced astonishing but not lasting results.

This nation has vast natural resources not simply in its lands and mountains but in its people as well and truly unexampled opportunities for their growth and development. What we are witnessing today, in the increasingly frequent appearance of prodigies of all types, is the natural result of an interaction between these resources and these opportunities for their development. But with characteristic wastefulness and lack of husbandry, we are spilling the resources over the cup. We have not yet learned the conservation of human resources as we have begun to learn the conservation of natural resources.

When we do, we shall go back to the child in the school. There we shall teach the brotherhood of man in the universality of knowledge. Instead of separating individuals for intense and special development of skills, we will emphasize the essential unity of all subjects and the essential ability of all to understand them and participate in them. In this democracy of the spirit, music which, with the other arts, is at the very core of knowledge is peculiarly fitted to play an important part. As a full-fledged subject of study, it must take its place side by side with mathematics and language, sci-

ence and literature. And as such must it exist throughout primary, secondary school and college, so that we may send to the four corners of the country people who will carry the news that music has passed the transition stage and come of age.

We are now going through a period of great economic, political and physical stress. In the vastness of what confronts us in a post-war world, there is the danger that music will lose whatever it has gained toward maturity. Amid the pressures of problems of reconstruction, it may take on even more the character of an outlet for emotions and idiosyncracies which bear no relation to its essential nature. We stand, too, on the threshold of an even greater period of scientific discovery and exploration than the one preceding the war. What is to be the rôle of art during such a period? Our mechanical ingenuity has gained us inestimable benefits but they should not blind us to one important limitation upon it. Science or industry can bring priviledge and comfort within the reach of all but it cannot confer knowledge of how to use them. This is the province of art. For art enriches the personality with a consciousness of its own resources. The person thus enriched can look upon his neighbor's possessions and abilities with equanimity.

Let us remember this. Music must be recognized as part of our daily life, as the rightful heritage of every child. It is not a release from or a substitute for existence; it is part of existence. In the healing and regeneration of our sick and sore, let us remember the

spiritual as well as the physical. Let us develop the potentialities of our children with impartial patience, and let all who teach music be aware always that although the progress of music means change and difference, we must not make the mistakes of the past but we must take the best it has to offer and build upon it for the future of a great American art.

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